

THE SERVE ILLINOIS COMMISSION ON VOLUNTEERISM AND COMMUNITY SERVICE



Quarterly Newsletter
Summer 2021



Mission

To improve Illinois communities by enhancing volunteerism and instilling an ethic of service throughout the state.

Vision

An Illinois where all citizens recognize their ability and responsibility to help strengthen their communities through voluntary service.



Find your passion!
**Click here to volunteer
in your community!**


Commission on Volunteerism
and Community Service


AmeriCorps

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Governor's Volunteer Service Awards: applications now open!

The Serve Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service presents the Governor's Volunteer Service Awards. These awards recognize individual volunteers through a statewide award program to highlight the importance of volunteerism and community service in the state of Illinois.

The following awards categories are offered:

- Adult (19-54 years old)
- AmeriCorps Member (member of an Illinois AmeriCorps national service program)
- Business (a for-profit company)
- Senior (55 years old plus)
- AmeriCorps Seniors Members (55 years old plus who are members of the national service programs Foster Grandparent Program (FGP), Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Senior Companion Program (SCP))
- Youth (18 years old or younger)
- COVID-19 Medical Volunteer (special recognition for 2021)

A panel of judges from across the state, consisting of governor-appointed commissioners, former awardees, and Illinois leaders, will select the award recipients. 2021 nominations opened on July 1, 2021 and close August 15, 2021.

Nominate an Illinoisan for the highest Illinois state-level recognition for volunteers. U.S. citizenship is not required for nomination. Illinois state residency is required.

Nominate an Illinoisan [here](#). The deadline for nominations is August 15th.

Have a question or need more information? Call or us at 800-592-9896 or e-mail Serve Illinois at dph.serveillinois.gov

Learn more about last year's awardees [here](#).

Summer 2021



2021 Governor's Hometown Award

Young Leaders in Action - Decatur, IL

Young Leaders in Action (YLIA), a youth-led initiative of 108 Macon County high school students wanting to positively benefit their community, is the winner of the 2021 Governor's Hometown Award. Sponsored by The Community Foundation of Macon County and Decatur Rotary Club No. 180, young adults widen their philanthropic view and leadership skills by participating in community service projects, monthly planning meetings, educational workshops, and more.

Examples of the group's outreach include sack-lunch distribution, collecting Christmas gifts for local foster children, an international youth-led conference open to other area high school students, and more.

The other finalists for the 2021 Governor's Cup were The Village of Flossmoor's Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, The Village of Barrington's Dreamway, and Albion's Hope Center. These cities were involved in two rounds of judging and selected as finalists from more than 40 applications. The event is available for viewing [here](#).

Upcoming Events

August

- 10** - Board of Commissioners Meeting
- 15** - Governor's Volunteer Service Award application deadline
- 12-22** - Illinois State Fair, Springfield, IL. Learn more [here](#)

September

- 6** - Office closed in observance of Labor Day.
- 11** - 9/11 Day of Service. Learn more [here](#). More information on Chicago event with the Greater Chicago Food Depository coming soon.

October

- 11** - Office closed in observance of Indigenous Peoples' Day
- 14** - National Service Opening Day. Invite-only event for AmeriCorps and Community and National Community Service members

November

- 10** - Governor's Volunteer Service Awards. Invitation only. Springfield, IL.
- 7 - 13** - Veterans Week of Service.
- 11** - Office closed in observance of Veterans Day.
- 25-26** - Office closed in observance of Thanksgiving.

December

- 24** - Office closed in observance of Christmas.

Board of Commissioners Updates

A new chair and vice-chair were elected to the Board of Commissioners in early 2021.



Natalie Furlett, Chair

Natalie Furlett is currently the Director of Partnerships and Member Engagement for Campus Compact, a national coalition of 1,000+ colleges and universities committed to the public purposes of higher education. Before joining the national Campus Compact office, Natalie was the Director of Campus Compact for Illinois. Prior to Campus Compact, Natalie spent time building student-community ties at Northwestern as the Coordinator of Student Community Service before taking on the role of Associate Director of the Norris Center for Student Involvement.

Nisan Chavkin is the Executive Director of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago. Previously, he served as executive director of the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago. Chavkin holds a BA cum laude from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and studied at The University of Chicago. He received additional training through the NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Research. A native of Onondaga County, New York, and a Chicago Bears fan, Chavkin lives with his wife in Evanston, Illinois. They have two daughters.



Nisan Chavkin, Vice Chair

Welcome to our new Commissioners!

The Serve Illinois Commission welcomes several newly appointed Commissioners. They each bring unique expertise and perspectives to the Serve Illinois Commission, and help engage the state in volunteerism and community service.



Allison Angeloni

Allison currently serves as the Director of Policy for the Steans Family Foundation, where she leads a portfolio of policy and ecosystem work across multiple issue areas including education, employment, and community development.



David Christensen

Mr. Christensen is a practicing Emergency Management Coordinator for the County of McHenry as the Director of the Emergency Management Agency. He is a graduate of the National Emergency Management Advanced Academy and certified as an Illinois Professional Emergency Manager in 2015.



Andres (Andrew) J.
Fernandez

Andres J. Fernandez is the Chief Operations Officer for SGA Youth and Family Services. Andrew is entering his 8th year with SGA in October of 2021. Andrew has worked in human services for the past 34 years working with children, youth, and families.



Bridget Hayman

Bridget Hayman specializes in digital, media, and content marketing with 19 years of experience activating cross-channel communication strategies in healthcare, finance, and the nonprofit sector.

Welcome to our new Commissioners!



Ashli Nelson

Ashli Nelson serves as the Director of Global Impact, Government Affairs and Multicultural Public Policy for McDonald's Corporation. In this role, Ashli leads legislative and community relations strategy to ensure that Government Relations, Communications, and Diversity & Inclusion are respectively aligned to protect and promote the McDonald's brand and its independent franchisees to external organizations, federal, state, and local elected officials.



Curtis Peace

Curtis has worked in the field of Education for more than 25 years. He completed his undergraduate studies at Lane College in Jackson Tennessee with a B.S. in Business Administration/Computer Science. He went on to receive a Graduate Certificate in the Director's Leadership Program at Erikson Institute, a Graduate School of Child Development in Chicago, Illinois. Thereafter, he received his Masters of Arts Degree in Education from Concordia University in St. Paul, Minnesota where he majored in After School/ Youth Development. Most recently, Curtis was admitted to the University of Pittsburgh, Department of Education, and Extended Learning Doctorate Program.

Curtis has served in many different positions of Education throughout his professional career. Presently, Curtis serves as Executive Director for the Illinois AfterSchool Network (IAN).



Carolyn Roberts

Carolyn Roberts is a native of Stamford Connecticut, who lived in Oak Park, Illinois 1995-2004, and built her current home in Chicago, Illinois in 2004. She is an energetic and enthusiastic team member of HandsOn Suburban Chicago, located in Arlington Heights, Illinois currently serving as Director of AmeriCorps Seniors, RSVP of Northern Cook and DuPage counties.



Amy Rueff

Amy Rueff lives in Decatur and is a community activist. She grew up in Wapella, Illinois as the youngest of 19 children and has worked her entire career as a union member.



Congratulations to the 2021-2022 AmeriCorps grantees!

Illinois has received \$17,120,066 in funding from AmeriCorps.

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These grants will put more than 1,000 AmeriCorps members on the ground to serve with 12 organizations awarded with federal competitive-level funds, tackling some of the toughest problems in Illinois. Serve Illinois, the Governor-appointed commission on volunteerism and community service, will also receive \$5,203,583 in state-determined formula funding, which will, in turn, be awarded to Illinois organizations to support an additional 33 AmeriCorps members in the coming months.

Organizations funded include:

- Public Allies, Inc.
- Up2Us, Inc.
- Academy for Urban School Leadership
- American Red Cross - Chicago
- Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois
- Illinois Bar Foundation
- Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago
- Teach For America
- United Way of Metropolitan Chicago
- Youth & Opportunity United, Inc.
- Sauk Valley Community College
- Board of Trustees of Western Illinois University
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Chicago
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Dundee Township
- Girl Scouts of Southern IL
- Peoria Park District
- Reading & Math, Inc
- SAGA Innovations
- College Possible
- Relay Graduate School of Education
- Springfield Urban League
- The City of Springfield
- Metropolitan Mayors Caucus
- Girls Scouts of Northern Illinois
- Cahokia School District
- Greater Chicago Food Depository
- Beyond Sports Foundation
- The University of Chicago
- Leave No Veteran Behind
- City of Peoria
- Housing Forward
- The Gardeneers
- Rend Lake College
- Herrin House of Hope
- Kankakee County State's Attorney's Office
- YMCA of Rock River Valley
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Livingston County
- Chicago Heightening Opportunity and Potential for Educational Success
- Illinois Public Health Association
- Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House
- Literacy Volunteers of Illinois
- Northwestern University Settlement Association
- Southwestern Illinois College
- New Star, Inc.
- Severson Dells Nature Center.

The Serve Illinois Commission is pleased to welcome and introduce the new staff members who have joined our office.



Noelle Ayoka Mota Samuels
Executive Director

Noelle Ayoka Mota Samuels (known as Ayoka) is the Executive Director for the Serve Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service and has been in this role since the fall of 2020. In her role, she provides leadership and strategic direction for AmeriCorps programs, strategic volunteer efforts, the Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTS), medical volunteering along with disaster/emergency volunteering throughout the State of Illinois. Before joining the Commission, she served as the Director of the Gary Comer Youth Center in Chicago's Grand Crossing community providing supports and opportunities for more than 4,000 youth and their families annually since 2006.

A native Chicagoan, Mrs. Mota Samuels studied at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in Agricultural Communications & Education and later received a Master of Non-Profit Management degree from Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies. In addition to her academic accomplishments, Ayoka has served in the nonprofit sector professionally since 1993.

The organizations where she has served include Boys & Girls Clubs of Chicago, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, BR&R Communications, Muntu Dance Theatre of Chicago, New Concept Development Center, and as a consultant for Malcolm X College's Kwanzaa Committee. Additionally, Ayoka has been a contributor to several organizations, initiatives, and coalitions over the years at community, city, national and international levels working to improve the quality of life for Illinois residents and all global citizens. She also provided professional development training for various agencies such as After School Matters, the Chicago Park District, the Illinois Afterschool Network and the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities. She is a member of the Chicago Community Chorus, The Chicago Peace Hub and she's also a founding member of Antonio's Response for Victims of Gun Violence.

Additionally, she is a fellow of Leadership Greater Chicago, The Allstate Greater Good Nonprofit Leadership Program and the UBS Nonprofit Leadership Program at Northwestern University. Ayoka also serves as a board member of the Leadership Fellows Association of Leadership Greater Chicago, advisory board member for the Trauma Center at University of Chicago Medicine and president of the Wright Connection (a family unity organization).

Karen Pendergrass is the AmeriCorps Programs Manager at the Serve Illinois Commission. Karen oversees programming and grants for the AmeriCorps program.

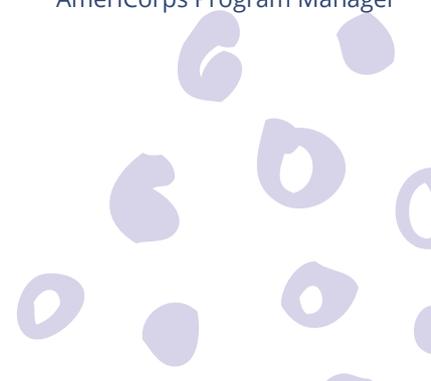
Karen joined the Commission in October 2020, after 3 years in the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Immunization Program. Karen has worked at IDPH for more than 23 years. She has worked in the Infectious Diseases Division for the HIV/AIDS Program and Immunization Program. In the Office of Preparedness and Response, Karen was the Section Chief for the Training and Exercise Unit. Karen has also worked in the Cancer Registry and the Cancer Prevention Program.

Prior to working for the State of Illinois, Karen worked in the social services field at the Gateway Foundation Substance Abuse Treatment Centers as the Quality Control Coordinator and the Family Service Center as a Case Worker.

Karen is an Air Force veteran. She holds a bachelor's degree in Child, Family and Community Service from the University of Illinois at Springfield as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Master Exercise Practitioner Program (MEP) certification. Karen is the mother of three young men, Jon, Andre II, and Anthony and the grandmother of three.



Karen Pendergrass
AmeriCorps Program Manager





Claire Starling

Master's of Communication

Danielle is a Graduate Public Service Intern at the Serve Illinois Commission while she pursues her Master's in Public Administration at the University of Illinois – Springfield. She recently graduated from Western Illinois University, with a BA in Political Science. As a part of her undergraduate degree, Danielle has done research on immigration policy (presented at the 2021 Midwest Political Science Association Conference), language policy, and transatlantic relations. She has spent two semesters studying abroad to gain multicultural and immersive language experiences in Granada, Spain and Mannheim, Germany.



Danielle Kyle

Master's of Public Administration

Board of Commissioners

Learn more about all of our commissioners [here](#).

(* denotes voting member)

Jane Angelis, Continuance Magazine;
Carbondale

Howard Lathan, Chicago Area Project;
Chicago

Alison Angeloni, Steans Family Foundation

Catherine Leonis, US Department of Health
and Human Services; Chicago

Carmen Ayala, Illinois State Board of
Education; Springfield*

Shelley Long, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of
Illinois; Chicago*

Nisan Chavkin; Evanston (Vice Chair)*

Tiffany Mathis, AmeriCorps Alum;
Springfield*

Scott Clarke, American Red Cross;
Springfield*

Ann McCaughan, University of Illinois at
Springfield; Springfield*

Ami Copeland, Chicago*

Jenné Myers, Chicago Cares; Chicago*

Laura Davis; Chicago

Rachael Dietkus, University of Illinois,
Champaign*

Katherine Nelson, Youth Representative;
Springfield*

James Dixon, AFSCME; Springfield*

Jennifer North, South Holland

Natalie Furlett, Illinois Campus Compact;
Chicago (Chair)*

Carolyn E. Roberts, Hands on Suburban
Chicago; Chicago

David Geenen, Doris and Victor Day
Foundation; Rock Island

Amy Rueff, Illinois AFL-CIO; Decatur

John Gremer, Walgreens; Willow Springs

Anne Schuman, CJE SeniorLife; Morton
Grove

Bridget Hayman, Access Living; Chicago

Cynthia Sims, Southern Illinois University;
Carbondale

Shawn Healy, iCivics; Chicago*

Steve Solomon, Exelon Corporation and
Foundation; Glen Ellyn

Heather Foster, AmeriCorps*



**American
Red Cross**

Every 2 seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood. By hosting a blood drive, you can make a real difference.

Click here



for more information on how to host a blood drive with the American Red Cross.

Serve Illinois Staff

Noelle Ayoka Mota Samuels, Executive Director
Michelle Hanneken, Volunteer Programs Manager
Karen Pendergrass, AmeriCorps Programs Manager
Jordan Lomelino, AmeriCorps Program Coordinator
Dawn Davis, Public Health and Medical Volunteer
Coordinator
Danielle Kyle, GPSI Intern and Volunteer Outreach
Coordinator
Claire Starling, GPSI Intern and Volunteer Outreach
Coordinator

Learn more about our staff [here](#).

Governor J.B. Pritzker

Deputy Governor Sol Flores

Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike

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Keep up-to-date with Serve Illinois on social media!

